Published and Copyright (c) 1999 - 2001
All Rights Reserved

Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
Dana P. Jacobson, Publisher/Managing Editor
Joseph Mirando, Managing Editor
Rob Mahlert, Associate Editor

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
Thomas J. Andrews -- "Keeper of the Flame"

With Contributions by:

Rodolphe Czuba
Bengy Collins
David Ducassou
Rob Mahlert

To subscribe to A-ONE, change e-mail addresses, or unsubscribe, log on to our website at: www.atarinews.org and click on "Subscriptions".
OR subscribe to A-ONE by sending a message to: dpj@atarinews.org and your address will be added to the distribution list.
To unsubscribe from A-ONE, send the following: Unsubscribe A-ONE
Please make sure that you include the same address that you used to subscribe from.

To download A-ONE, set your browser bookmarks to one of the following sites:

http://people.delphi.com/dpj/a-one.htm
http://www.icwhen.com/aone/
http://a1mag.atari.org
Now available:
http://www.atarinews.org

Visit the Atari Advantage Forum on Delphi!
http://forums.delphi.com/m/main.asp?sigdir=atari

=~=~=~=

~ Pop-Unders Pose Puzzle ~ People Are Talking! ~ ESNA News!
~ Lobby For .kids Domain ~ CT60 News Update! ~ MyAtari Update!
~ STeem Gets Updated! ~ Net Smut Law Challenge ~ Songbird Gears Up!
~ CT2 Source For Sale! ~ AOL Losing Grip On IM! ~ Spy Report Required

-* Atari Sponsors French Soccer *-
-* Senator Puts Pressure On Windows XP *-
-* Amazon 'Leaves Door Open' For AOL Buyout! *-

=~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Well, all good things draw to an end sooner or later. It was one heckuva vacation, though! What a great time. I got a lot accomplished without a lot of hard work. The weather was great, with a couple of days of rain that was really needed (and cooled things off tremendously). We had a short heat wave, but that was neutralized by the pool! That was certainly a heat-quencher! We bought a new (used) car, got the permit for the shed that goes up next week, got some errands done that have been procrastinated for awhile, saw my father and brother in Maine, brought home a secondhand snow thrower for our lovely winters, and a lot more stuff done. And, I got a chance to kick back and relax - read a lot, drank a lot, and ate a lot! And I still have the weekend in case I feel like putting down some more loam. In another three or four weeks, I have some more time coming. It's nice to have six or so weeks of vacation every year rather than trying to cram everything into a two or three spread out over the year. Oh, sorry Joe!

I did have a couple of items that i wanted to comment on this week, but unfortunately I was busy relaxing to get around to putting my thoughts together. And then today, I was in Maine so I haven't much time to get this issue finished off and sent out to our subscribers, and online readers. Then again, I'm not sure our online readers will be able to read this week's issue too soon - Delphi moved some equipment around this past week and it doesn't appear that everything is back to "normal" yet. I haven't been able to get onto our support pages on Delphi for most of the week. We'll see in a very short time, I guess.

Anyway, I won't go into any real editorializing this week. Heck, I'll chalk it up to being on vacation and the brain cells are not pumping as much as usual! Maybe next week I'll be better prepared.

Until next time...

=~=~=~=

Hello,

After a long period of inactivity (since February) on the CT60, I’m happy to announce you that I took some decisions to be able to rout the CT60 board and so arrive to the manufacturing of a prototype.

I obtained too that the manufacturer will produce freely for me, reducing my development’s costs.

As you may know, I’m very busy with the design of the new Riored-J, a nice ’alternative OS’ PPC board that will surely be usable by the atari world ....
But it is no yet time to speak more about this...

I think that the CT60 prototype will be assembled during september 01...

I will try to put online some technical data about the CT60 production, like schematics...allowing everybody to see the effective advance of the work !

’See’ you soon.

--
Rodolphe CZUBA
4, AllØe du Laurier
F-60290 AUVILLERS
FRANCE
email : rczuba@free.fr
WEB : www.czuba-tech.com

CT2 Hardware Sources To Be Sold

I sell the ABEL sources (last version) files for the logic chips of the CT2A and CT2B ! Send a proposition.

Those files must be compiled to binary JEDEC (.JED) format and sent to your CT2 : you can modify your CT2.

For that, you need the software from LATTICE : ISP SYNARIO 3.0 package + // hardware cable.

I sell the ISP SYNARIO 3.0 SOFTWARE + HARDWARE package :
Send a proposition.

Rodolphe CZUBA
4, AllØe du Laurier
F-60290 AUVILLERS
FRANCE
email : rczuba@free.fr
WEB : www.czuba-tech.com

Hey everyone,

We've been working pretty hard lately getting everything ready for the opening of Europe Shareware North America, which will officially open this Monday! Currently, we carry the complete Europe Shareware catalogue, but will further expand it in the future to fit the needs of our customers. Anyway, if you haven't registered your shareware or bought any new programs lately because you did not want to deal international transactions, you should give ESNA a look. We're non-profit, so our prices are very competitive. (American and Canadian customers only please)

ESNA: http://www.europe-shareware.org/english/

Bengy

Atari Soccer Team!

Atari sponsors a soccer team !

The software company Infogrames that recently bought the Atari brand, is located in the town of Lyon in France.

For the season of 2001, the soccer (football) team of the town of Lyon will be sponsored by Atari!

Follow the link to see the nices clothes with Atari logo onto !! :-D
Prepare yourself for the "Atari fashion" comeback ! ;-)

http://www.olympiquelyonnais.com/4/archives/402_archives_62.asp

Weird Atari

The Atari port of one of the most strange programming languages ever. Archive includes source (C), language reference and sample programs.

URL: http://www.mypenguin.de/prg/

MyAtari Magazine: New Look Site and July 2001 Issue!

I am proud to announce the launch of the July 2001 issue of MyAtari magazine at www.myatari.net. Its launch is slightly late due to upgrading our site - sorry!

Why not check out our new look and the July issue at www.myatari.net

Best Regards,

Matt Bacon, Editor
www.myatari.net

STeem v1.62 Released

From the Steem website..

As with so many other things you can wait so long for a new version of Steem and then 2 come along very quickly. The main reason for a new version is that v1.6 mysteriously started crashing on Windows 2000, we've fixed that and added some more stuff that makes v1.62 worth the download for all non-2000 users:

Bugs Fixed

-Windows 2000 crashing
-Sound improved, bubbling greatly reduced
-DIM support really works now (for DIMs created with all sectors option)
-Date error

New Features

-Stopped mouse movement at startup causing key press (it does this on a real ST)
-Searchable readme in General Info
-Small icon view in Disk Manager
-10 Quick folders in Disk Manager (right click on go home and set home buttons)

URL: http://www.blimey.strayduck.com/

=~=~=~=

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. My intro is going to be short this week. I'm just going to mention a few things including SETI@home's TEAM ATARI and then get right to the UseNet stuff.

I'll be on vacation this coming week, and I'm trying to "get ahead" at work so that I'm not swamped with work when I get back. Since I don't get six months of vacation time a year like <ah-hem> some people that I could mention, I've got to make the most of the few that I do get. So yard work is out of the question, as is any serious work on web pages or in-depth reviews or rebuttals on the UseNet.

One thing I WILL be doing however, is to see if I can speed up my PC's work on SETI@home. For anyone who doesn't already know, SETI@home is a 'distributed computing' project which in effect forms the world's largest super-computer by distributing packets of data collected by the Arecibo radio telescope for the purpose of finding a signal from

intelligent beings outside our solar system.

Personally, I've been looking for intelligent life INSIDE our solar system, but that's neither here nor there.

Within the SETI@home system, there are groups of users who have banded together because of a common interest or circumstance. There are groups of people who work for the same company, groups of users interested in a common hobby, and even those who use a particular operating system or computer type.

One of these is TEAM ATARI... A band of Atari enthusiasts who use there "more modern computers" (you can't participate with an Atari computer) to join in the search.

So far we, as a team, have contributed almost 47 YEARS of CPU time to 'the cause'.

C'mon. Admit it... it'd be totally cool for the first signal from an extra-solar civilization to have been found by an Atari user, wouldn't it? If you're interested, browse on over to SETI@home's page: http://setiahome.ssl.berkeley.edu

or TEAM ATARI's page:
http://iosef.ssl.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cgi?cmd=team_lookup&name=Team+Atari
and see what all the fuss is about.

Well, there ya have it. That's the end of my intro. Let's get on with the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

Paul Nurminen asks about where to find STuff in North America:

"Well, after having it recommended to me by a couple people here, I downloaded the demo version of SoundPool's Audio Tracker. I was pleasantly surprised by it's performance, features, and looks. I think it might work out for me as an addition to Cubase Audio, when vocal tracks are needed.

Anyway, now the only problem is that I can't seem to find it anywhere in the US. I haven't paid as much attention to the Atari scene in the last year or so as I used to, but did Systems For Tomorrow and chro_Magic more or less liquidate their Atari stuff? Seems like there isn't much on the sites anymore. Are there any other US or Canadian Atari dealers still around that carry SoundPool's product line? If not, I suppose I could try to order it directly from SoundPool themselves.

Any suggestions or help would be appreciated."

Phil Puffin tells Paul:

"Wizztronics in NY is the North American Distributor for Soundpool products. Go

to http://www.wizztronics.com.

They've also got a sale on their Falcon Rack (it's a big sucker!) if

interested."

Paul tells Phil:

"Thanks for the information. The other day when I was looking, I tried to access the Wizztronics web site, and couldn't get in at all (just a page telling me I wasn't "authorized" to view the page - or something to that effect). I naturally assumed they were no longer in business (ha!). However, trying again tonight after reading your post, I did get in. The list all the SoundPool products (hardware and software), so I sent them an e-mail to find out if they have them in stock, and their prices.

Interestingly, SoundPool themselves have been very responsive and helpful in answering my e-mails to them. They have both products in stock, and the prices are pretty good too. However, they tell me that they won't ship overseas for a purchase less than 400EURO, as they say the "shipping costs are exorbitant". Seems a little strange to me, as I've both SHIPPED and RECEIVED packages to and from Europe from here in the United States, and have never had a problem from other companies, and never thought the cost was _that_ unreasonable. Plus, wouldn't _I_ be the one to pay the shipping anyway? Why should they care how much it is?

They did offer to sell me the software, and send it via e-mail (with a postscript file manual), but in my particular recording situation, the software _without_ the Analog 8 output expander is really almost useless.

Has anyone else here run into this when ordering products form overseas?

Anyway, hopefully Wizztronics has the products, and has them at a reasonable price. Otherwise, I suppose I'll have to look for a used Analog 8 here in the group. Anyone selling one?"

Lyndon Amsdon asks about scanning resolution:

"I need to scan some pics for my website using GT Look 2. I'm trying to think what DPI I should scan at. Is it better to scan at around 100DPI and 50% to make it roughly the right size for my website or scan at 50DPI but 100%?

Also would a better result be given if I scan at a high (320DPI) resolution then half the DPI. I can't see how to do this in Imagecopy 4?

Scanning is done in 24bit colour and after processing would be converted to JPEGs. It would be nice to have the image quite sharp."

Ken Springer tells Lyndon:

"The question sounds simple enough, but it's more complicated than you think!

If you look at my website (link in the signature), you'll see I scanned quite a few pictures. And the wiring diagrams came from the CAD program that was used to create them (I think). I may have imported the CAD drawing into a different CAD program to create the file. The pictures of the finished aircraft are digital, and nothing was done to them. The other pictures are either 35mm or Polaroid instant pictures.

First decision- Do you think you'll ever want to print the pictures)? If so, scan them as if you would be printing and then modify as necessary in a program like Photoline. Or do two scans at the same time, one for printing, and one for the web.

As for the web pictures, some assumptions have to be made at your end. One is the resolution you are going to assume the the person viewing the page will be using, how big physically you would like the pictures to appear on the page, and if you want on the fly scaling of the picture by the viewer's browser. At least, I think you can make the browser autoscale the pictures. I've only created my pages, and it's been about a year since I made them and I can't remember for sure.

At any rate, making it a jpeg is the very last step you want to do. Do all your color corrections, touch ups, sharpening, etc. on a copy of the original scan, then save the edited version in a file format that will retain the full range of colors. JPEG's will decrease the colors.

I could go into more detail, but I'll quit here."

Brian Roland asks for help finding a software supplier:

"My usual Atari retail outlet informs me I'm now an ASH orphan, at least through him.

Anyplace in the USA I can upgrade these titles?

HD Driver 7.61
NVDI 5.1
CAB 2.7
MagiC 6

In all cases It has been about 2 years since I updated. I'm at least one version behind in them all.

If I'm forced to go over seas for upgrades, and they can't be done online. It would be nice if one place could take care of it all."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Brian:

"HDDriver can be upgraded by the author Uwe Seimet and I think he's German. Not too difficult, he'll probably pop up here or go to his website. NVDI can be updated to 5.3 for free if you go to Atari Workshops site. CAB, not sure, latest is 2.8 and I think there is little between the two versions. Magic 6 can be updated to 6.1 I think, and Europe Shareware seem to be opening a branch in North America so I think you're in luck. These programs above (except HDDriver) haven't seen an update for some time, Magic 6.20 might be around the corner."

Uwe does show up, and tells Brian:

"HDDRIVER can also be upgraded by Atari Workshop in England. In case you are not yet a registered user of HDDRIVER your original HDDRIVER floppy disk is required for the update. The current version is HDDRIVER 8 and more information is available on my webpage: http.//www.seimet.de/atari_english.html."

Detlef Lewin jumps in and adds:

"As from monday Europe Shareware North America (ESNA) will be in business. Maybe they can help you.

<http://www.europe-shareware.org/english/>"

Phil Huff asks about transferring ST files to PC:

"Between 1993 and 1995 I made The Cheaters Digest, awarded a decent 76% by ST Format. I still have all the original disks but, sadly, no ST.

Short of buying myself an Atari, has anybody any idea how I can get these onto my PC?

From memory I think the disk format was fairly standard, with 80 tracks and 10 sectors. I don't recall putting any tricky copy protection on."

Kenneth Medin tells Phil:

"Win-95 can read DD floppies formatted with 10 sectors and 82 tracks. The reason is that initially Win-95 itself came on floppies. I don't think newer Windows versions have this feature any more, but I havn't tried.

Btw, I just formatted a floppy as above and put it in my Win-95 and it worked fine. Be sure to keep the floppies _write protected_ as Windows actually will try to write to the bootsector even if you only read from them."

Phil tells Kenneth:

"That could explain things. I have Windows ME - it can read the directory OK, but refuses to copy any files. I'll find a Windows 95 box and have a go with that."

Steve Stupple adds:

"Windoze 98/se can read extended formatted disks.

What i do is use a program called DC format 3.0 to add an ms-dos compatible bootsector, and then can read AND write to the disk with no problems.

For normal use I tend to format the disks via windoze and then transfer files via floppy that way.

If the disk have a few files you could try GEMexplorer, which is part of the gemulator system, they do have a trial/limited version for people who don't have the gemulator, but this only moves ONE file at a time. IT does read all Atari disks I've thrown at it."

Bob Retelle adds his experience:

"It all depends on how your ST disks were formatted (by that I mean what version of TOS was in the machine that originally made them.)

Early versions of TOS had a bug that prevented PCs from reading disks they formatted, but since you indicated you can read the directories on the disks, this probably doesn't apply.

If you still can't read them, there are some (old) DOS based programs which might help IF you can find them.

"ST2PC.EXE" and "STTOPC.EXE" (which may in fact be variations on the same program- it's been that long since I've even seen them) are PC programs which will READ files from ST formatted disks, and let you COPY the files onto the PC's drives.

You can't access the floppies directly from Windows using these programs, you must copy the files onto the PC hard drive first using the program.

(I'm going to have to see if I can find either of these programs, as this question keeps coming up. I know I probably have them on a disk somewhere, but locating the disks would take longer than searching the web.)"

Edward Baiz asks for help with a dial-up problem:

"I am having a strange online problem. Sometimes when sign on to my ISP, I cannot do anything. If I try to get mail or get on a website, the modem sends a signal, but no data comes from my ISP. There have been times that if I wait long enough while I am online, things start to work again. My ISP says it is fine at it's end. I though that maybe my ISP was upgrading the system, but they say no. When I am locked out, I can still get online if I use my wife's PC. Anyone know what the problem is? My wife thinks it is my modem, but if that was the case I should be not able to sign and get connected. This happens with both Sting and Stik2. "

Steve Sweet commiserates with Edward:

"I often find that I can get online with a PC where the Atari refuses to tread, and its a mystery to me."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Edward:

"Get back to the basics and use sting to connect and use it's own ping tool to ping your ISPs IP address."

Peter Slegg posts this interesting CAB trick:

"Here is a clever trick that I discovered with CAB a few days ago.

One of the annoying features of CAB is that it is impossible to cut text from the web page.

I normally resort to viewing the source in Everest or Luna and then cutting the piece of text that I want and reformating it.

However, if Papyrus is used as the source code viewer then when the Source icon is clicked a Papyrus window opens that shows the web page much like it appears in CAB. However because it is now being viewed in Papyrus it is possible to save it as a PAP/RTF or to cut and paste while retaining the style.

Now if only Papyrus could be used as a web browser..."

Steve Sweet, with tongue firmly in cheek, tells Peter:

"And since Papyrus speaks OLGA, any alterations you make are immediately reflected in the Papyrus window. As if by Mint!, that doesn't sound right does it, As if by Magic!, thats better."

Peter West adds:

"You can also load it into Look'n See and it will display the text in it, stripped of the tags etc. I have installed L'n' S as a viewing application for most files so can double-click an 8+3 HTM and get the text in a window, from which blocks can be cut to the clipboard - or even the whole page written to disk by selecting this in the Print dialog. Unfortunately V 0.95, at least, will not do this with LFNs, but most still can be loaded into it if you start it manually first. On a few occasions this fails (?with *very* long names?) but you can always rename them, or copy them to a partition that doesn't have LFN's enabled."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

=~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - X-Box Shrek! Songbird Update!
Dreamcast Price To Drop Again!
Extermination! NCAA Football 2002
And much more!

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Dreamcast Price To Drop

In an effort to sell through its remaining stock of Dreamcast hardware units, Sega will reduce the price to $79.99 on Aug. 14, retailers and analysts said. Sega also will introduce additional $19.99 titles to its All-Star lineup, including such games as "NBA 2K1" and "NFL 2K1."

"After the initial price drop to $79.99, Sega has told us that they will further reduce the price of Dreamcast to $49.99 either around Christmas or early next year, depending on how much inventory they have left over," said Doreen McKenzie, director of merchandising and video games at Babbage's

Etc., a leading specialty video game retailer.

"Although we're already ahead for the year with Dreamcast sales, the drop to $79.99 will double our current monthly sales," Electronics Boutique vp Pete Roithmayr said. "When you think about the Dreamcast system selling for $49.99 next January, it's almost scary."

"We believe this will assure a clean sell-through of the Dreamcast video game system, which was an excellent but ill-fated gaming console," said Anton Bruehl, president of the International Development Group, a video game consulting house. "With Dreamcast hardware out of the way, Sega will be able to focus on its multiplatform gaming strategy for console and online games."

A Sega spokeswoman said, "We do not comment on rumors or speculation."

Sega sold about 83,500 Dreamcast units last month, according to an analyst who studied NPD TRSTS Videogame Group data. But the former first-party console maker is still overstocked with unsold Dreamcast inventory and wants to get rid of the remaining consoles.

Dreamcast hardware sales were up 82% last month, compared with last year, and the system has been selling well since the price drop to $99, said Richard Ow, senior account manager at NPD TRSTS Videogame Group.

Sega's first-party software has performed well, especially "Sonic Adventure 2," which sold more than 125,000 units last month, according to NPD TRSTS Videogame Group data.

With few exceptions, the system hasn't been kind to third-party publishers, though most of the major players abandoned the system before the price drop in February.

"Dreamcast is a great system with a solid lineup of games," Ow said. "Sonic's performance is amazing considering the Dreamcast is supposed to be a dead system."

With a lower price point and a solid lineup of more than 200 games, the system is an excellent buy for mass-market consumers.

With "World Series 2K2" and the next line of Sega Sports games shipping in the fall, along with "Shenmue II," Sega has some excellent games hitting retail shelves, McKenzie said.

After its 30 games slated for this fiscal year ship, it's unlikely that Sega will spend much of its resources on Dreamcast development. Sega has 26 online games running for Dreamcast, the first console video game system to take gaming online.

Heading into November, when Sony faces competition from Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's Gamecube, analysts and retailers don't expect Sony to reduce the price of PlayStation2.

"With the inclusion of a DVD player in PlayStation2, Sony is loathe to drop the price because console game manufacturers are experiencing severe hardware profit blues," Bruehl said. "I expect Sony to reduce the price of the recently released "Gran Turismo 3" PlayStation2 from $329 to $299, essentially offering a free game with the system."

"GT3" is a mass-market game that has broken sales records during its first

week of release and is expected to have a very long shelf life.

"I think you'll see the 'GT3' bundle become the standard PS2 system this fall for $299," Roithmayr said. "It will definitely help sales of the system."

Taking a page from Nintendo's playbook, the company that invented the console bundle, Sony is expected to make a move to counter the dual console launches of its competitors.

"Even if Xbox and Gamecube don't meet the demand this fall, which is likely, Microsoft and Nintendo will still sell between 1 million and 1.5 million hardware units," Bruehl said.

Nintendo is expected to be hit the least in the fall because its system doesn't have a movie DVD player. However, Matsushita has said that a hybrid DVD player/Gamecube device, called Fusion, will ship in Japan in the fall and hit North America during its next fiscal year, March 2002-03.

Extermination Mutates Onto PlayStation 2

Fear of Infection Spreads Through the Action/Adventure Experience Of the Summer

Sony Computer Entertainment America announced the release of Extermination, a dynamic action-thriller, available exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system. Developed by Deep Space, Inc., Extermination is spawn from the creator of MegaMan, Ghouls and Ghosts and TOMBA! and from the executive producer of Bio Hazard. With its innovative gameplay design, heart-pounding excitement and intense cinematics, Extermination delivers the action-movie experience of the summer.

Players must navigate through intricate level designs using ''on-the-fly" decision making and strategic survival tactics to outlast and defeat a deadly mutant virus. In order to deliver the utmost realism, Deep Space, Inc., collaborated with weapons expert, Ichiro Nagata, who is recognized as an expert in his field and is a writer and photographer for Combat Magazine. Mr. Nagata is licensed to participate in FBI and SWAT weapons training and brought invaluable knowledge to the making of Extermination. Players may customize their weapon, the Special Purpose Rifle 4 (SPR4), with several different types of upgrades, including a tactical grip, grenade launcher, flame thrower, shotgun unit, zoom and night scope among many other components. Combining realistic combat experience with the compelling storyline, Extermination encourages players to use appropriate weapons and tactical planning for the situation at hand.

''Extermination utilizes the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system's phenomenal power to fill environments with rich textures, fluidly animated creatures, unique gameplay elements and pulse-heightening music. Gamers will certainly appreciate the spectacular visual scenes, sophisticated weaponry and intense action," said Ami Blaire, director, product marketing, Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ''Extermination is like a suspenseful action movie that is going to test the mettle of even the most skilled player with its treacherous mutant creatures, plot twists, and terrifying gameplay."

At a top-secret military station in Antarctica, Extermination sets the

stage for the mission to save mankind from a virus that infects both organic and inorganic objects. Playing as U.S. Special Forces Marines RECON team ‘‘Red Light" member Dennis Riley, players brave unforgiving blizzards and intense pressure situations on a mission through a military base only to discover this biological disaster. Surviving all out carnage is a core element of Extermination, but strategic planning is essential for coming home. Dennis must defeat the mutant creatures and exterminate the virus, before he becomes infected and mutates.

Through the technological capabilities of PlayStation 2, Extermination features enhanced player environments with adverse weather conditions, interactive environments and an extensive collection of creatures and weapon accessories. See the action through a chilling third person view, or an all too real first person view while aiming your weapon. Like a gripping movie, Extermination uses cinematic cut scenes to portray the incredible story of mankind’s possible extermination.

The independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) has not yet rated Extermination.

’Shrek’ Xbox Game Steals Microsoft Show

It may not be the key to boosting profits at the world’s biggest software company, but a flatulent green ogre stole the limelight at Microsoft’s annual pitch to Wall Street analysts.

After hours of detailed presentations concerning Microsoft’s line-up of upcoming software like a new version of the Windows operating system, some 300 analysts were treated to new video games that will run on the company’s highly anticipated Xbox console.

In the first public showing of one exclusive Xbox title, Microsoft games evangelist Seamus Blackley played ‘‘Shrek", a game based on the hit animated movie from DreamWorks studios.

Startling the audience Thursday, Blackley showed how players controlling the grumpy green ogre would accomplish missions by stunning their enemies with flatulence.

By eating spicy peppers, Shrek can also emit fiery belches, which when combined with the flatulence can produce a gastrointestinal weapon of considerable power, Blackley said.

‘‘He can ignite the fart," Blackley said.

Blackley also showed off ‘‘Dead or Alive 3," a fighting game featuring realistic shadows, detailed landscapes and areas that can be explored.

‘‘For a hard-core gamer seeing this in a store for the first time this is absolutely a freak-out experience," Blackley said.

Microsoft said the Xbox is still on track for a November launch in North America, with an expected 4.5 million to 6 million units to ship through next June 30, the end of the company’s 2002 fiscal year.

‘‘The key for success will be, we have to execute well on this. We have to manage this business very soundly because this has to be a profitable

business," John O’Rourke, director of games marketing, told the gathering.

Online gaming, which will be supported on the Xbox with a built-in fast Internet connection, was scheduled to be introduced in the first half of next year, O’Rourke said.

Microsoft did not say when the product would launch in Japan, a topic of much industry discussion lately amid concern the machine was facing a lukewarm reception among Japanese audiences and developers.

O’Rourke said it was hard to paint a clear picture of Xbox’s progress in Japan.

‘‘Japanese businesses are notoriously tight lipped, especially in the game industry, about what projects they are working on," O’Rourke said.

NCAA Football 2002 from EA SPORTS Debuts on The PlayStation 2 Console

Leading College Football Videogame Features New Graphics, Game Engine and 3D Mascots

This year’s road to the National Championship leads to the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, and NCAA Football 2002, launched from Electronic Arts, is the first to offer a way to get to all four Bowl games this year.

The top-selling college football game is back making its debut on the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system featuring a new game and graphics engine. NCAA Football 2002 was developed by one of the leading sports game developers in the country, Electronic Arts -- Tiburon, known for its development of EA SPORTS Madden NFL franchise.

NCAA Football 2002 showcases high-resolution polygonal football players in a level of detail never seen before in college football on any gaming platform. Division 1-A stadiums are replicated to include lighting, scoreboards, band and visitor sections in the crowd. The true college feel arrives on a next-generation system with stunning graphics, including the introduction of 3D mascots and incredible player detail such as helmets featuring Buckeyes, Tomahawks and many other team specific pride stickers.

Gamers have the ability to track their team’s national ranking throughout the season on NCAA Football 2002 with the Top 25 standings and BCS rankings. If they are good enough, gamers can take their team to one of 26 Bowl games, including the National Championship at the Rose Bowl, the Nokia Sugar Bowl, FedEx Orange Bowl and Tostitos Fiesta Bowl. NCAA Football 2002 is the only game to feature these top four bowl games. If a team does not earn a bowl bid, individual honors such as the Heisman Memorial Trophy, and All-American awards can be earned.

‘‘NCAA Football 2002 is by far the most detailed and graphically superior football game available," said executive producer Steven Chiang. ‘‘This next generation version really gives you the feel that you are sitting in a college stadium somewhere in the U.S., watching a quarterback option play, listening to the band play in the stands, while watching the team mascot perform on the sidelines. We have brought all the emotion, passion, tradition of college gameday to the PlayStation 2."

Gamers can select from any of 117 Division 1-A or 27 Division 1-AA teams. With an award-winning broadcast booth featuring Brad Nessler, Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit, NCAA Football 2002 includes play-by-play and color commentary for the first time. New features also include Campus Challenge, a reward-based system that awards redeemable credits. Gamers can earn credits by rushing for over 100 yards or by throwing to a receiver for three consecutive complete passes. With credits in hand, gamers can purchase Campus Cards that unlock special teams, including the ability to play as team mascots, the 1991-2000 All-American teams and 15 All-Time teams

Dynasty Mode is deeper than ever this year and can support up to 12 players. It is now possible to analyze the BCS rankings, track year-by-year and cumulative career stats for any player, save a draft class at the end of each season, and go deeper into the recruiting mode with personal information such as hometown, GPA and 40 time. Players can even be drafted into Madden NFL 2002, which is scheduled for release in August.

NCAA Football 2002 is rated ‘‘E" (Everyone) by the ESRB and is only available on the PlayStation 2. NCAA Football 2002 is analog controller compatible and supports up to 8 players. Suggested retail price is $49.95.

=~=~=~=

->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
"""""""""""""""""""""

Songbird Gears Up For Expo, Announces JagFree CD

July 25th, 2001

For immediate release:

ROCHESTER, MN -- Long-time Atari Jaguar and Lynx supporter Songbird Productions recently unveiled plans to make a splash at the next Classic Gaming Expo to be held in Las Vegas, NV, on August 11th and 12th.

"I want this year to be the most fun ever for Lynx and Jaguar fans," commented Carl Forhan, owner of Songbird. "That’s why Songbird has expanded to a double booth at the show. We need to make more room for lots of new product as well as something really cool: a mini-museum for rare/prototype Lynx and Jaguar items. You can expect to see some developer hardware, unreleased games, and more at the Songbird booth this year."

Featured games at the show will include Championship Rally, the exciting new four-player overhead racer for the Lynx, and Protector SE, the highly-anticipated sequel to the fan-favorite Protector which was released for the Jaguar in late 1999. Protector SE contains new graphics, music, level designs, and gameplay enhancements, plus one particularly intriguing new feature: JagFree CD bypass support.

Carl commented, "JagFree CD bypass support means that Protector SE will be able to play brand new, unencrypted Jaguar CD games released in the future.

By moving to the CD medium, an aspiring publisher can release games on a smaller budget and at a user-friendly price point." Carl also described plans to eventually release the JagFree CD code into the public domain, to encourage other developers to include the same support in any future game or stand-alone cartridge. Protector SE is slated for a late fall 2001 release.

Songbird Productions is the premier developer and publisher for the Atari Lynx and Jaguar. To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at http://songbird.atari.net. For more information on CGE, please visit http://www.cgexpo.com.

Championship Rally and JagFree CD are trademarks of Songbird Productions. Protector is a trademark of Bethesda Softworks. All rights reserved. This message may be reprinted in its entirety.

=~=~=~=

A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

AOL May Come Up Short in IM Battle

AOL Time Warner's dominant instant messaging service (IM), now under increased pressure from competitors, is conducting tests that will allow its users to communicate with people who use other products such as Microsoft's MSN Messenger.

The giant Internet and media company said that it is almost finished developing government-mandated technology that will let its messaging service operate with other systems.

In a filing with the Federal Communications Commission, AOL said it has selected a standard, developed new customer software, and created systems that will work with its competitors.

But industry observers say that AOL is losing its grip on being the top IM provider, despite having a huge lead in overall subscribers to its Internet service.

As a condition of gaining FCC approval for its US$102.6 billion merger last January with Time Warner, AOL was required to have an interoperability system ready to test by now.

In the meantime, however, rivals such as Microsoft and Yahoo! have moved forward on their own and plan to offer advanced IM features that go well beyond what AOL offers.

Microsoft is putting new IM capabilities into its Windows XP operating system, which is scheduled for release on October 25th. The new features include videoconferencing and document collaboration tools.

Yahoo! has also announced videoconferencing capability in its latest version of Yahoo! Messenger.

The stakes are high for all the companies, but for none more so than AOL, which is gradually losing dominance in the IM sector.

Jupiter Media Metrix estimates that AOL is presently the clear leader. About 25.5 million people have downloaded AOL's free service, and the online giant's 31 million subscribers also have access to the service.

But MSN Messenger claims to have about 32 million users around the world, and expects that number to increase significantly once Windows XP is released. Jupiter said that in the United States, the MSN service had 18.4 million users in the latest month tallied.

With more than 192 million people registered for the various services it offers, more people log on to Yahoo! than any other Web site. But according to Jupiter, its instant messaging service has dropped to third place, registering 11.8 million users in May.

"AOL could lose its competitive edge," analyst David Joyce, of Guzman & Company, told NewsFactor Network. "I don't know if it would be catastrophic to its business, but I think they would like to hold on to their leadership role."

All the leaders have recently experienced problems with their IM services. None was more widely publicized than Microsoft's fiasco earlier this month, when its IM service was partially down for a week.

For Microsoft, the firm's Passport system -- a technology that is centered around its IM capabilities -- is the cornerstone of the company's plan to compete with AOL for supremacy on the Web.

AOL said in its FCC filing that testing of the new technology was complicated because of the likelihood of "unacceptable delays in the transmission of messages and/or presence information" and that some systems would potentially suffer poor performance.

The company said it is close to reaching an agreement with a yet-unnamed technology firm to start its testing.

"Upon successful completion of these tasks, AOL then plans to finalize its gateway, install updated code on its production servers, and begin developing a finished client that supports interoperability," the FCC filing said.

Senator Demands Changes in Microsoft Windows XP

Political pressure on Microsoft Corp. intensified on Tuesday as the company came under attack from a key Democratic senator, and one of the state prosecutors in the antitrust case was said to be considering seeking a court order to block the release of its Windows XP operating system.

Sen. Charles Schumer of New York took aim at Microsoft at a morning press conference, saying the company should make its new Windows XP operating system more open to rival software applications as part of any settlement

of the antitrust case.

‘‘I am sending a letter to the head of the (Justice Department’s) antitrust division, asking that he not settle with Microsoft unless they agree to a global settlement providing open access for competitors," said Schumer, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Meanwhile, a source close to the case said New York Attorney General Elliot Spitzer was looking ‘‘very closely" at the idea of seeking a court order to block the release of Windows XP.

The state is headquarters to AOL Time Warner Inc. and Eastman Kodak Co., two companies that are both embroiled in competition disputes with Microsoft over Windows XP.

Schumer said the government should block the October release of Windows XP unless the software giant redesigns it to make it work more easily with rival software applications such as Kodak’s digital photo imager and AOL’s instant messaging program.

His comments came the day after Microsoft entered preliminary discussions with prosecutors at the Justice Department and 18 state attorneys general aimed at restarting settlement talks between the two sides.

In response to the senator, Microsoft released a statement saying Windows XP will benefit consumers and the computer industry. The company said it ‘‘does not believe the complaints of AOL and Kodak merit a congressional hearing."

On June 28 a federal appeals court upheld lower-court findings that Microsoft abused its monopoly in the market for personal computer operating systems, in part by excluding competing software.

The appeals court overturned a lower court’s order that Microsoft be broken into two companies. It ordered that a new lower court judge consider remedies against the company and determine whether it illegally tied its Internet browser to Windows.

Some Wall Street analysts who follow Microsoft are hoping the company can forestall any remedies until after the release of Windows XP.

Schumer’s complaints also dovetailed with an announcement by Judiciary Committee chairman Patrick Leahy, a Vermont Democrat, that he plans to spotlight Microsoft’s business practices at a September committee hearing on how to promote competition on the Internet.

Schumer said he had spoken to Spitzer and urged that states in the lawsuit seek a court injunction to stop the release of Windows XP unless Microsoft redesigns the new operating system.

‘‘Reluctantly I have come to the conclusion that Microsoft’s release of Windows XP in its current form will likely be unfair, anticompetitive and, in the long run, extraordinarily detrimental to many consumers," Schumer said.

Spitzer is one of the most active among the 18 attorneys general who were party to the antitrust case against Microsoft. His spokeswoman, Juanita Scarlett, would say only that Schumer’s concerns about Windows XP ‘‘should be addressed as part of a resolution of the ongoing case."

It was unclear whether the other attorneys general or the Justice Department would consider an injunction against the Windows XP release. The department and several other state prosecutors declined to comment on Schumer’s comments Tuesday.

In its response, Microsoft noted that there are thousands of companies, including 50 located in New York, ‘‘that are actively working on and have a stake in the successful launch of Windows XP."

‘‘Contrary to AOL’s self-interested lobbying, Windows XP is designed to enable user choice and partner opportunity," Microsoft said. ‘‘Windows XP is designed to bring more choice and options to consumers, not fewer."

Prosecutors Urge Court to Deny Microsoft Re-Hearing

U.S. prosecutors on Thursday urged a federal appeals court to press ahead with the case against software giant Microsoft Corp. by denying a request that the court re-examine part of the ruling in the landmark antitrust case.

In a brief filed with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, the Justice Department and 18 state attorneys general pressing the case denied Microsoft’s contention that a lower court’s findings were ‘‘clearly erroneous."

‘‘Microsoft’s repetition of its arguments offers no basis for this court to reweigh the evidence that it has already considered," the government’s brief said.

Microsoft asked the judges on July 18 to re-examine a portion of the ruling that found the company illegally "commingled" computer code of its Internet Explorer browser and the Windows operating system to protect its monopoly power.

But government prosecutors, who have been trying to speed up consideration of the case, said in their response to the request that the case should not be delayed.

‘‘The court left to the district court on remand the task of fashioning an appropriate decree to remedy the effects of Microsoft’s unlawful conduct and restore competition, the extent possible," the government’s brief said. ‘‘It is time for that process to go forward."

The legal wrangling stems from a June 28 appeals court ruling that overturned a lower court’s order that Microsoft be broken into two companies, but upheld findings that the company abused its monopoly in the market for personal computer operating systems.

The ruling concluded Microsoft engaged in ‘‘exclusionary conduct" by weaving together computer code of the browser and operating system and taking the browser out of Windows’ Add/Remove folder.

Microsoft has argued throughout the case that Windows and Internet Explorer are a single, integrated product. In its motion to re-hear the case, it said none of the computer code in Windows is specific to Web browsing.

In its response on Thursday, the Justice Department said the company had

mischaracterized parts of the court record in making its case. ‘‘In short, Microsoft is not entitled to a rehearing," the government brief said.

Government prosecutors have asked the same appeals court to expedite the case back to a lower court judge, who is to consider what remedies to impose and determine whether Microsoft illegally tied its Internet Explorer browser into the Windows operating system.

Jim Desler, a spokesman for the Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft declined comment on the specifics of the government’s brief.

‘‘We maintain that the trial court ruling on this matter was erroneous and should be corrected," Desler said. ‘‘We remain committed to moving forward promptly in the legal process and continue to remain open to resolving any remaining issues in the case as quickly as possible."

Microsoft executives have repeatedly said they want to move the case along as quickly as possible.

However, many antitrust attorneys say the company’s legal maneuverings may be designed to delay the case so any sanctions won’t be imposed by the courts until after Microsoft rolls out its new Windows XP operating system, which is scheduled for release in October.

There is no deadline for a ruling from the court, which could come at any time.

Privacy Group Is Taking Issue With Microsoft

A leading privacy group intends to file a formal complaint with the Federal Trade Commission about Microsoft’s plans to bundle its Passport identification system for collecting personal information into its new Windows XP operating system.

The complaint from the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a public interest and advocacy group, promises to add to the pressure on Microsoft’s strategy of tightly linking a series of Internet services like music, shopping and banking to Windows XP.

The Senate Judiciary Committee plans to hold hearings in September on Microsoft’s plans for integrating Web services into the new operating system, which is scheduled to be introduced on Oct. 25. And a member of the Judiciary committee, Senator Charles E. Schumer, a New York Democrat, sent a letter yesterday to the Justice Department and several state attorneys general urging them to enjoin Microsoft from shipping Windows XP unless it scales back its plans.

The Passport system stores personal information from users, like passwords, so they do not have to re-enter data at different Web sites. It is essentially a portal into a host of Web services that Microsoft will offer itself or through industry partners. The services initiative, called Hailstorm, will enable a person to store his or her calendar, contacts, credit card and other personal information as part of a vast database at Microsoft.

In the company’s vision, Hailstorm will be a boon to personal convenience and productivity sharing personal information according to a user’s

instructions and automatically, using clever software, making doctor's appointments, buying music online, booking airline tickets and handling other tasks.

But privacy advocates worry that Passport is a product brimming with public policy issues and ripe for abuse. And, they argue, the way that Microsoft's preview versions of Windows XP emphatically steer users to sign up for Passport is heavy-handed, if not deceptive.

Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, said yesterday that his group planned to file a complaint about Passport with the F.T.C. in the next week or two. The decision by the privacy group comes after Mr. Rotenberg met July 17 with Timothy J. Muris, the F.T.C. chairman. At the meeting, Mr. Rotenberg discussed a number of issues, including the privacy concerns about Passport.

The complaint would be filed under Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, which prohibits unfair or deceptive trade practices.

The prospect of Microsoft as a steward of a huge storehouse of personal data, Mr. Rotenberg said, raises a number of issues. Hacking programmers, he noted, often find security flaws in the company's programs. "Microsoft has not established itself as the Fort Knox of Internet privacy," he said.

Mr. Rotenberg added that Microsoft's Passport and Hailstorm programs had the potential to place the company at the center of a large share of Internet commerce and online activity. Thus, he added, Microsoft's plans for Windows XP the next version of the company's monopoly product were a matter of public interest. "These big architectural changes in the computing infrastructure need to be mediated by the policy process," Mr. Rotenberg said.

Microsoft says that there are already more than 100 million people with Passport accounts, most of whom have signed up to use Microsoft's free e-mail service, Hotmail. But the company has recently elevated Passport to become an important part of its Web strategy, with Windows XP as its distribution vehicle.

The new operating system promotes Passport emphatically. After the user starts up a computer and uses a modem, a box that appears on the screen states: "You've just connected to the Internet. You need a Passport to use Windows XP Internet communications features (such as instant messaging, voice chat and video), and to access .Net-enabled features. Click here to set up your Passport."

As people increasingly use cell phones and hand-held computers to tap into the Internet, the traditional desktop PC will less and less be the principal access device to the Web. In the Microsoft strategy, Passport becomes the user's path to tapping into the Internet rather than a specific hardware device. It is that long- range prospect far less than Microsoft's immediate plans that concerns some privacy advocates.

"The long-term privacy issue is if Passport becomes the universal log- in for almost everything in our lives," said Richard M. Smith, the chief technology officer for the Privacy Foundation, an educational and research organization.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center used a complaint with the F.T.C. to prod a company to change its behavior last year. After the privacy group filed a complaint, DoubleClick, a large Internet advertising agency,

changed its privacy practices by agreeing not to merge the data it collected with the data from Abacus, a marketing company, acquired by DoubleClick, that tracked the catalog-shopping habits of consumers.

"Passport will make DoubleClick look like a candle flicker," Mr. Rotenberg said.

Microsoft, Mr. Rotenberg noted, is of necessity sensitive to matters of privacy. Yet he questioned what weight might be given to privacy, consumer welfare and choice, when those conflict with Microsoft's business strategy.

With Passport, Microsoft executives reply, the company's business plans and consumer welfare are aligned. They say that when Microsoft rolls out its Hailstorm Web services next year, the company will not make money by trading in personal data or collecting transaction revenues as a middleman. Instead, it envisions the Web services, using the Passport system, as a subscription service. Users will be charged monthly fees, based on what level of services they sign up for.

"We're going to allow individuals to manage their data instead of letting their information be exploited by marketers," said Richard Purcell, Microsoft's chief privacy officer. "That's a big shift in how personal information fuels economic activity."

Microsoft executives note that the "default" setting on personal information collected in Passport accounts name, password, zip code and credit card information, if a person signs up for the electronic wallet feature is not to pass it along to any third parties. The user, they say, will determine who his or her information is shared with and when. That is a stronger, more personalized privacy policy, they say, than is the norm today, either in traditional commerce or on the Internet.

"We totally acknowledge that we have a perception problem one that has been fanned by our competitors but we think our message and our policy is pro-user," said Brian Arbogast, the Microsoft executive in charge of Passport.

"And we understand that the key challenge we face with Hailstorm and Passport is trust," Mr. Arbogast said. "For Passport and these services to gain any success and any adoption, we have to gain the trust of both end users and industry partners."

Hotmail Users Surprised by Upgrade, Redesign

Hotmail users got a surprise on Thursday when they logged on to find the e-mail service had been upgraded.

After several false starts this week, with some other Microsoft Network services being affected on Tuesday as Hotmail installed the upgrade, the latest version went live without any apparent major hitches.

Besides a new look similar to MSN Explorer, two additional languages, clearly-labeled tabs and icons, and a Quick Address List are among the new functions of the Web-based e-mail application.

Rick Holzli, director for MSN Hotmail at Microsoft explained that the

company’s intent in the upgrade was to create for its users a "better way to handle their e-mail and protect themselves from spam."

"It took me by total surprise," Alana Reynolds, a senior Web site producer who has used Hotmail since 1997, told NewsFactor Network.

Though she admits to not always reading the messages Microsoft sends to subscribers, she didn’t recall seeing it posted anywhere on the Web site or in her inbox.

"It was a little disconcerting because I hadn’t heard anything about it," said Reynolds.

Pam Mayfield checks her Hotmail account daily for personal e-mail and was also startled by the new look.

"They didn’t tell us they were changing it -- it was kind of a surprise," Mayfield told NewsFactor.

Hotmail did not comment on its method of alerting subscribers to the upgrade.

Though the upgrade may have caught users off guard, the new spam filtering system might be welcomed by many. The filter allows subscribers to select a level of protection between low, high or exclusive level.

The exclusive setting will only permit e-mail from people listed in a person’s address book to reach the inbox.

"I would use Hotmail so much more if I didn’t have so much spam," said Reynolds, who added that her account receives between 200 and 300 spam messages a week, not counting the nearly 600 that the old spam filter nabs.

After a year of intense spam, Mayfield noticed a trend among locations from which the e-mail was sent.

"I’ve actually written to Hotmail about spam I’m getting though their accounts," said Mayfield of the weekly sex messages she receives.

Mayfield said the company told her to block the users individually, but she finds they never use the same address twice.

"I’m afraid to look at my Hotmail at work because of all the porn," Mayfield said. "If they would clean up the spam, I would love that."

Despite the massive amount of unwanted messages Reynolds’ account is bombarded with, she intends to keep using the service -- and her address.

"It’s my one e-mail address that is constant," Reynolds said. "It’s something people can always find me at. That’s important."

Although Reynolds noted the e-mail service is free, she also believes many people use Hotmail as their only account, and were probably stunned by the seemingly overnight change.

"People don’t think of it as a Web site, but as their e-mail," Reynolds said. "They think of it as theirs. And it is. What would Hotmail be if they didn’t have their users?"

Amazon ’Leaves Door Open’ for Buyout by AOL

This week’s investment agreement between Amazon.com and AOL Time Warner reportedly contains language that "leaves the door open" for a possible merger, a merger-and-acquisition attorney told the E-Commerce Times on Wednesday.

According to published reports, the agreement -- which calls for AOL to invest $100 million in Amazon as part of a five-year alliance -- allows AOL to talk to Amazon directors about a possible buyout, as long as the discussions remain confidential.

Such a provision normally is not part of a contract, said Michael Goldman, a merger-and-acquisition attorney at Wilmington, Delaware law firm Potter Anderson & Corroon. Goldman was familiar with reports of the contract language, though he said he had not seen a copy of the agreement, which was filed Monday with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

"The question is, why did they put that in there?" Goldman said.

Amazon and AOL announced the new alliance on Monday, building on a marketing partnership that dates back to 1997.

As part of the new agreement, Amazon said its e-commerce technology will power AOL’s shopping destinations, giving the e-tailer direct access to 350 AOL merchants and AOL’s 30 million-plus members. In return, Amazon said it would promote AOL as its exclusive Internet service provider (ISP).

The agreement also reportedly contains provisions that are standard in stock-sale agreements, such as rules barring AOL and its affiliates from acquiring a stake of more than 5 percent in Amazon or from seeking control of the company’s board -- without an additional agreement.

Officials at Amazon and AOL did not respond to requests for comment.

Analysts who follow Amazon for Goldman Sachs cheered the deal with AOL, saying the investment provides "a significant credibility stamp for both Amazon’s equity value as well as the importance of e-commerce and Amazon in the converging world."

Others, however, suggested the deal may hamper Amazon when it comes to making deals with AOL competitors.

Pop-Up Web Ads Pose a Measurement Puzzle

While Web publishers and consumers disagree as to the intrusiveness of a relatively new type of online ad, the "pop-under" is rapidly catching on.

The landscape of the Web has changed. Or maybe not.

The widely followed ranking of Web sites by Jupiter Media Metrix indicates that X10.com is now the fourth-most-visited site on the Internet, after America Online, Microsoft and Yahoo, and ahead of Terra Lycos.

But Nielsen/NetRatings, the other major Web audience measurement service, ranks X10.com at No. 116.

The discrepancy is only one of the issues raised by X10 Wireless Technologies, a Seattle company that sells gadgets to appeal to the do-it-yourself James Bond.

The reason so many people visit X10's Web site and the reason Nielsen/Net Ratings does not count much of the company's traffic is that X10 uses an advertising technology that opens an X10 Web page on a surfer's computer screen, whether the surfer wants it there or not.

This type of ad is a relatively new form called a pop-under. And X10 has been most eager to take advantage of the new willingness of the major Web publishers, desperate for advertising revenue, to sell the sort of big and intrusive advertisements they would have shunned even six months ago.

Pop-under ads are distinct from the pop- up windows long seen by users of AOL Time Warner's flagship America Online service that appear on top of other pages. The X10 ads open up in a separate, full browser window a window underneath whatever site the user is viewing. Only after the user closes the chosen window, presumably because it is time to do something else, does the lurking pop-under window become visible.

The technique was originally developed by the online pornography industry, and it has raised a debate among publishers and advertisers about whether this format is simply too obnoxious to be an effective way to sell things.

Richard V. Hopple, chief executive of Unicast, which makes technology to provide pop-up ads with sound and motion, argues that the X10 ads are giving such advertising an undeserved bad reputation.

"An ad ought to play on a page or in between pages of a site," he said. "In a pop-under, the ad plays on my spreadsheet after I close my browser window. I paid for the spreadsheet; the advertiser didn't. It's like running a commercial after I tried to turn the television off."

But what better time to run a commercial, counters Emmanuel Schalit, president of Flipside. Mr. Schalit's company is the online games unit of Vivendi Universal, the French media conglomerate. Vivendi, through a series of mergers, has come to own a small Los Angeles company called Traffic Market Place that has developed the technology used for pop-under campaigns by X10 and others including Vivendi's own game site, Iwin.com.

Pop-under ads, Mr. Schalit said, are "more attractive both to publishers and to consumers than classical pop-ups because they do not interrupt the flow of your Internet session," Mr. Schalit said.

But Marissa Gluck, an analyst with Jupiter Media Metrix, said the data shows that consumers find the X10 ads anything but attractive.

"X10 has sparked the most violent reaction from consumers," she wrote in a recent report. She found that 73 percent of the people seeing the X10 ads left the page within 20 seconds. That is a much more rapid defection, she wrote, than even for pop-up ads.

Nonetheless, some of the biggest Web publishers including Microsoft, Yahoo, Primedia and TheNew York Times have decided to accept pop-ups and pop-unders. Other advertisers besides X10 that are making heavy use of

such ads to draw traffic to their sites include eBay and Real Networks.

Quite apart from the question of whether pop-under ads are too intrusive for users is the debate about whether they should be treated like any other Web site for the purposes of audience rankings. For some industry executives, the controversy over the ads includes whether Jupiter Media Metrix should be counting pop-under ads as visits to Web sites in the same category as visits to America Online and Yahoo. For these critics, it as if TV ratings counted beer commercials as part of prime-time programming.

Steve Coffey, Jupiter's executive vice president, argues that if a Budweiser commercial were in fact a 30- minute infomercial, it would indeed be tallied in the Nielsen ratings. Similarly, once a Web ad grows large enough to appear in its own browser window (rather than as a part of some other page), Jupiter will count it like any other Web page.

"There is a danger in making editorial judgments about what goes on the list," Mr. Coffey said. "Our job is to report what is happening on the Internet."

But several leading publishers support Nielsen/NetRatings in its contention that an advertisement is not in itself a Web site, even if it pops up in a separate window.

"X10 is a completely different kind of animal from Yahoo or AOL or MSN, and it should not appear in the audience measurement," said Anke Audenaert, Yahoo's director of global market research.

And yet, the debate highlights a reality of the Web medium: the monthly rankings of the top sites have always been a hodgepodge, mixing advertising-supported sites like Yahoo with online stores like Amazon.com and all manner of hybrids and combinations.

"You can't buy ads on Nasa.gov, but we still rank it too," Mr. Coffey said.

And indeed, the advertisers and publishers that buy the Jupiter and Nielsen/Net Ratings services do not so much rely on the published rankings as they slice and dice the data in an effort to divine the composition and habits of Web users.

"The top 10 list is a data point, but we have lots of data points," said Sharon Katz, media director at Modem Media, a Norwalk, Conn., advertising agency. She says she has no concerns about how the X10 site's audience is reported.

Ms. Katz, like many in the Internet advertising and publishing world, says she still finds the ratings services to be lacking in many ways, especially their measurement of users in offices and at universities. But she acknowledges that the ratings have improved from the early days.

Whatever their limits, the top site lists published by the ratings services have played an important symbolic role during the short and hectic life of the World Wide Web guiding investors, journalists and executives looking to find the Internet's next hot trend.

Rapid rises in audience ratings, for example, helped create the first public notice of eBay, the auction site, and Geocities, which let users make personal home pages. Indeed, it was the audience provided by Geocities, rather than its meager revenue, that caused Yahoo to buy it for

$4 billion in 1999.

If there is any real impact from the ratings for the new pop-under ads, it may be for those sites that are both buyers and sellers of advertising like Real.com and Iwin.com, both active buyers ofpop-up and pop- under advertising. Rebecca Young, the vice president for marketing at Nielsen/NetRatings, argued that counting such both types of ads would overstate those sites audiences and distort the analysis of their users' demographic characteristics.

"At the end of day, advertising is sold based on these sites," Ms. Young said. "It is intentionally misleading to include demographics based on advertising on a site like X10." Nielson/Net Ratings has created a series of filters so it will not count windows that contain only a single advertisement, although it concedes its approach is not foolproof.

X10, since it is paying for the pop- under ads is presumably motivated more by sales than ratings. It is hard to know for sure, since Robin Champion, its spokeswoman and Alex Peder, its president, did not return calls seeking comment.

But Mr. Schalit of Vivendi said X10's objective was clearly to sell more products.

"Getting high on the Media Metrix ratings was not a goal of X10," he said. "Their goal was to make money."

U.S. Representatives Lobby for 'Dot-Kids' Top-Level Domain

Two co-sponsors of a bill that would force the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to issue a "dot-kids" top-level domain (TLD) suffix held a press conference on Capitol Hill Tuesday to generate support for the measure.

U.S. Representatives John Shimkus (R-Illinois) and Ed Markey (D-Massachusetts) criticized ICANN for rejecting the dot-kids TLD last November. They also urged their fellow House members to support the bill, which was first introduced June 28th.

"There's usually a kids' section in the library," Shimkus told reporters. "We're attempting to provide a kids' section of the Internet."

"[ICANN] had their opportunity," he added. "I'm not willing to wait on them any longer."

The Dot Kids Domain Name Act of 2001 would create a basic structure and regulations for a dot-kids TLD, requiring that the newly-established TLD be publicized and that parents be educated in how to filter inappropriate content. The act would also charge the Department of Justice (DOJ) with preventing unscrupulous or criminal elements from preying on kids who access Web sites using the new TLD.

"Dot-kids is a great example of what can happen when everyone's top priority is the protection of our children," Illinois state attorney general Jim Ryan said in a prepared statement issued on July 17th. "In today's world, protecting our kids on the Internet is vitally important."

If the bill were passed into law, ICANN would be forced to develop a dot-kids TLD within the subsequent 30 days. In addition, the legislation would prevent ICANN from establishing any new TLDs until dot-kids was fully implemented.

Rachel Terrace, an analyst with Jupiter Media Metrix, told NewsFactor Network that she is skeptical that Shimkus' and Markey's bill would bring any improvements, either in protecting children or steering them to suitable content.

"My gut reaction is that [the bill] seems unnecessary and duplicative because COPA (the Child Online Protection Act) already has very strict content and data [regulations] for kids under the age of 13," Terrace told NewsFactor. That includes the types of data that can be collected from children without a parent's permission, and the type of content allowed to be sent to them, Terrace added.

The COPA commission issued a report last year that abstained from offering approval to the dot-kids suffix.

"Also, our research shows that most children, tweens and under, actually surf with their parents, either directly or while [the parents] are in the same room," said Terrace. "Parents are already closely monitoring their children's activities, so I don't think that [passing this legislation] will allay fears any more than what already exists."

Kevin Noonan, vice president of Internet and media research at the Yankee Group, told NewsFactor that the battle over the dot-kids suffix could prove to be a precursor to privacy legislation.

"I have a feeling that a vote on this would be very close," Noonan said. "It's a great idea in theory; however, getting the government to legislate it is more problematic than it seems."

Noonan said he could understand ICANN's reasons for sidestepping the dot-kids TLD; the organization would face liability issues and the daunting task of patrolling dot-kids Web sites to ensure their appropriateness.

"But let's not forget that children who are online today will be the leaders of tomorrow," Noonan said. "They're in a sense a test lab, and it's important that we understand and work to protect them without [prompting] an overreaching Big Brother effect."

Lawsuit Challenges Dot Biz 'Lottery'

The rollout of new Internet top-level domain names hit a speed bump this week with the filing of a class-action lawsuit alleging that the operators of the new dot biz domain name are running an illegal lottery by charging customers for the chance to register a dot biz name.

The lawsuit, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on Monday, alleges that NeuLevel, the operator of dot biz, is running an illegal lottery by charging consumers a chance at obtaining the dot biz name they seek. NeuLevel will randomize registrations for the same name to choose only one. There is no guarantee they will get the name once dot biz names go live on the Internet in October.

The suit also names as co-defendants the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which manages the Internet's domain name system, and several registrars, companies that have been licensed to sell dot biz and other Internet domain names to the public, including some of the biggest such as VeriSign and Register.com.

NeuLevel is charging the registrars $2 for each registration they submit. The registrars are passing that cost along with a surcharge on to customers who seek a chance at getting the dot biz name they want.

Dot biz was one of seven new global top-level domain names (TLDs) selected by ICANN in November to be added to the Internet's domain name system. They are the first such names to be introduced to the Internet since the 1980s when the most popular generic TLDs, dot com, dot net and dot org were created.

The two plaintiffs in the case so far are David Smiley, an Arizona DJ who wanted to register two dot biz names, and Skyscraper Productions, a Los Angeles company that operates a driving school along with other businesses and also was interested in registering a dot biz name.

They argue that NeuLevel's "lottery enterprise" is not only illegal but also unfair because it allows those with much financial resources to increase their odds of getting their name by buying multiple chances, according to Derek Newman, a Seattle-based lawyer handling the case.

"It is illegal because it violates lottery laws-(around the country) and unfair because it is misleading that they don't disclose" information about the odds of winning a desired domain name, Newman said.

Newman said his clients plan to seek an injunction to stop the process from going forward.

None of the parties involved in the case would comment on the lawsuit.

Newman, who made a name for himself as the lawyer who represented a company that sought to broadcast Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh's June execution on the Internet, has some high-profile help on his side. He is working with Edward Masry, the California lawyer made famous by the hit movie "Erin Brockovich."

House Requires FBI to Report on E-Mail Wiretaps

The U.S. House of Representatives passed a measure on Monday that would require the FBI to report how it uses the controversial e-mail wiretap system formerly known as Carnivore.

Although the bill places no restrictions on how the FBI could use its monitoring system, now known as DCS 1000, it would require the federal law-enforcement agency to provide a detailed report every year on how it was used.

In addition to basic information such as who, what, when, where and why the system was used, the FBI would have to reveal which officials authorized its use, which court approved the warrant for its use, which specific law was invoked in its use, and what additional information was gathered during

the process other than what the FBI was seeking to discover.

The measure was included in an annual bill approving operations for the Department of Justice. The House passed the bill by a voice vote; the Senate must approve it as well.

Developed to intercept the e-mail and other online activities of suspected criminals, Carnivore has come under fire from lawmakers and civil-liberties groups who say it is too invasive.

U.S. law enforcers have argued they need Carnivore to keep up with criminals who use online communications to plan and carry out terrorism, spying, fraud, child pornography and other crimes.

FBI agents, after receiving a court warrant, install the system on the suspect’s Internet service provider and filter out his e-mail messages, Web browsing activities and other online communications.

Under pressure from House Majority Leader Dick Armey and other lawmakers, the Justice Department last year commissioned an outside task force to review the system.

Attorney General John Ashcroft has ordered an additional review of legal and constitutional issues brought into play by Carnivore.

Armey, a prominent Carnivore critic, issued a statement welcoming the measure’s passage and the internal review.

‘‘Today’s legislation will provide additional accountability," the Texas Republican said. ‘‘Although this is not the end of the story, these are two steps in the right direction."

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment.

Judge: U.S. Internet Smut Law May Go to Trial

A free-speech challenge to a new U.S. law designed to protect children from pornography on the Internet may go to trial next February despite a government bid to get the case dismissed, a judge suggested on Monday.

A coalition of public libraries, library patrons and Web site operators filed the challenge in March against the Children’s Internet Protection Act of 2000, which would withhold federal funds from libraries and schools that fail to install smut-filtering software on personal computers.

The Justice Department, which is representing the Federal Communications Commission and the Institute of Museum and Library Services in the suit, asked a federal court in Philadelphia to dismiss the case saying the challenge is without merit.

But on Monday, the U.S. appellate judge who heads a special three-judge panel set up to oversee the case, said the constitutional questions raised by the lawsuit appear too numerous and too complex to be examined without a full-blown trial, which was tentatively scheduled for Feb. 14, 2002.

‘‘There are a zillion issues here," Chief Judge Edward Becker of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals told a team of Justice Department attorneys

during an hour-long hearing.

‘‘This case is unquestionably destined for the United States Supreme Court, is it not? ... Wouldn’t this court and the Supreme Court be much better equipped to deal with this after discovery and after trial?" he asked.

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Children’s Internet Protection Act into law in December. It was the federal government’s latest attempt to control pornography on the Internet after two earlier attempts were stymied.

In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the 1996 Communications Decency Act saying it infringed upon free speech. And in 1999, a U.S. district judge in Philadelphia issued an injunction against the 1998 Child Online Protection Act. That matter will be argued before the high court in the fall.

Three-dozen plaintiffs, headed by the American Library Association and the American Civil Liberties Union, allege the Children’s Internet Protection Act violates free speech rights enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. The plaintiffs argue that installing the pornography-filtering software constrains the ability of adults to access lawful material, including Web sites of interest to homosexuals and women’s groups.

They also complain that the law could leave individual librarians to determine what adults accessing the Internet should be allowed to see.

‘‘We say the traditional role of libraries is to provide material that the patrons want, not material that libraries and librarians believe are correct," ACLU senior staff counsel Chris Hansen said.

But Justice Department attorney Rupa Bhattacharyya, arguing that the challenge was without merit, reminded the three judges that the law does not constrain free speech but simply imposes conditions on libraries that choose to accept federal money.

‘‘The government is not required to subsidize the exercise of the first amendment. The government is not required to subsidize Internet access," she said. ‘‘Libraries were given money to connect themselves to the Internet for educational purposes."

Public libraries that fail to comply with the Internet law would risk losing government-provided discounts on Internet access, as well as federal grants. The library association, which represents 3,000 public libraries, said the amount of money in question totals about $215 million a year.

Becker said the panel would rule later on whether the case should be dismissed, but set no deadline for a decision.

=~=~=~=

Atari Online News, Etc.is a weekly publication covering the entire Atari community. Reprint permission is granted, unless otherwise noted at the beginning of any article, to Atari user groups and not for profit publications only under the following terms: articles must remain unedited and include the issue number and author at the top of

each article reprinted. Other reprints granted upon approval of request. Send requests to: dpj@atarinews.org

No issue of Atari Online News, Etc. may be included on any commercial media, nor uploaded or transmitted to any commercial online service or internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.